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1898



AN ADDRESS

ON THE

ERRORS OF HUSBANDRY,

Before

IN THE

19 November

UNITED STATES.

DELIVERED BEFORE

1577

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THE PHILADELPHIA SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
AGRICULTURE,

AT THEIR ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 14, 1818.

BY GEORGE LOGAN, M. D.

ONE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTS OF THE SOCIETY.

PHILADELPHIA:

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1818.

AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

Resolved, That the acknowledgments of the Society be presented to Dr. Logan, for his address delivered this day, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

ROBERTS VAUX, *Sec'y.*

1st mo. 14th, 1818.

ADDRESS, &c.

GENTLEMEN.

It is with diffidence I comply with your request to address you on this occasion of the annual meeting of your useful society : for, although I have been actively engaged in agriculture for more than thirty years, I have yet to learn, rather than to instruct others. However, I am willing to contribute my mite on this important subject to your general fund of information.

It is remarkable, that whilst agriculture has been declared by virtuous and learned men, and by the most enlightened statesmen, in all ages of the world, as an honourable occupation, as well as the most useful in civil society, yet it is too generally in the hands of poverty and ignorance. How is it to be expected, that a farmer, under such circumstances, and without some knowledge of natural history and chymistry, can personally become acquainted with the native qualities of the different soils of his farm, or can analyze vegetable, animal, and mineral substances, to ascertain which affords the best pabulum for his various crops ?

During the government of Cromwell, agriculture was in high estimation in England : the country gentlemen found the cultivation of their own lands to be the most profitable post they could occupy. But a few years after, when the restoration took place, all this industry and knowledge was exchanged for the dissipation of London ; and then husbandry passed almost entirely into the hands of a poor tenantry.

Like all other arts, agriculture is reducible to fixed, unalterable principles. It can only be improved by the knowledge of facts, as they happen in nature. It is by attending to facts, that the other branches of natural philosophy have been so much improved, whilst agriculture has been almost stationary. Chymistry is now reduced to a regular system, by the means of experiments : but where are the experiments in agriculture ? Books in this art we are not deficient

in; but the book which we want, is a book of accurate, well-digested experiments.

Agriculture is in general carried on by those whose minds have never been improved by science, taught to make observations, or to draw conclusions, in order to attain the truth; or by those who, although nature has been very bountiful, cannot carry their designs into execution, from the narrowness of their fortunes. The former can seldom know more than what they have learned from their fathers: the latter dare risk nothing, as their daily bread depends on the certainty of success. Independent of these obstacles, the difficulty of the art itself is sufficient to retard its progress. How delicate the circumstances that must attend such experiments! What a number of different observations on heat and cold, dry and wet, difference of soils, grains, seasons, &c. must be accurately made, before a farmer can be certain of the general success of an experiment! What a disagreement, from a small difference in one of those circumstances! How seldom can these experiments be repeated, which take a whole year before they can be brought to a conclusion! Indeed, such is the attention and care requisite in carrying agriculture to perfection, that no person should engage in this laborious occupation without being satisfied of its private and public utility. It will be attended with success, if conducted with prudence, frugality, and economy. In this view we include domestic manufactures, properly so called, in which the work is occasionally performed by the members of the family, assisted by their poorer neighbours in the spinning, and weaving at their own houses; which connexion forms a band of reciprocal benefits and friendship between them.

Extensive manufacturing establishments, supported by machinery, and the labour of children, have been found too frequently injurious to the morals of the people, wherever introduced; besides, the premature exertions and constant confinement of the children, are equally injurious to the future state of the body, as to the powers of the mind. But, as a distinguished writer* observes, "Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age

* Thomas Jefferson.

or nation has furnished an example. It is the mark set on those who, not looking up to heaven, to their own soil, and industry, as does the husbandman, for their subsistence, depend for it on the casualties and caprice of customers. Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition; this, the natural progress and consequence of the arts, has sometimes perhaps been retarded by accidental circumstances; but, generally speaking, the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears, in any state, to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts; and is a good-enough barometer, whereby to measure its degree of corruption. While we have land to labour, then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a work-bench, or twirling a distaff. Carpenters, masons, and smiths are wanting in husbandry; but, for the general operations of manufactures, let our work-shops remain in Europe. It is better to carry provisions and materials to workmen there, than bring them to the provisions and materials, and with them their manners and principles. The loss, by the transportation of commodities across the Atlantic, will be made up in happiness and permanence of government. The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores to the strength of the body. It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour:—a degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution.”

— Much has been said by agriculturists and statesmen, respecting the proper size of a farm, as calculated to produce the greatest surplus produce, after deducting all the charges necessary to cultivation; some confining it to twenty or thirty acres, while others extend it to two or three hundred. The just idea of husbandry consists in cultivating a farm with as much care as a garden, keeping it clean of weeds, and turning the soil to a proper depth, at the same time manuring it plentifully and judiciously. Influenced by this view of the subject, the larger the farm under the management of one family, the more productive it will be in surplus profit to the farmer and to the commonwealth. If a farm is so small, or so badly cultivated, owing to indolence

or poverty, as merely to afford sustenance to the family of the farmer, then no surplus profit will remain to be divided with the rest of the community. Every individual in society is therefore personally interested in the prosperity of agriculture; more especially the officers of government living on their salaries, and private persons living on their stated incomes. Taking wheat as a standard, if they have to give two dollars a bushel for this article, owing to scarcity, instead of one dollar, their pecuniary support becomes reduced one-half.

It is also the surplus produce of agriculture that maintains and employs the merchant and manufacturer: therefore, the greater this surplus, the greater must be its employment to the advantage of the manufacturer, the merchant, and to the whole community. The establishment of perfect justice and equality is the bond of union which will most effectually secure prosperity to all the three classes; and not arbitrary laws, violating the constitutional rights of either.

It behoves then the husbandmen of Pennsylvania, if they wish to retain the honourable station in society, to which they are entitled, on account of the solid utility of their occupation to their country, to cultivate their minds with useful knowledge, and not leave them blanks, to be scrawled upon by ambitious political demagogues—such characters, freed from the control of moral principles, their professions are like the flattering sun-shine of the morning, their acts like an evening deluge.

I have stated the most prominent defects of the husbandry of Pennsylvania, as arising from ignorance, and from a want of sufficient capital to conduct agriculture with advantage: the first, owing to the negligence of the farmer, in not cultivating his mind—the last, attributable to banking and manufacturing establishments, under the protection of government, absorbing a portion of capital that might be employed to greater advantage in agricultural improvements.

A flourishing agriculture inevitably occasions the possession of such manufactures and commerce, as are equal to the support of numerous and flourishing towns, and to whatever is necessary to form a great and potent society. Let government secure to agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, *equal rights*, in exclusion of every idea of monopoly.

We may safely affirm, and our assertions are founded on unquestionable facts, that any country will attain the utmost prosperity of which its government is capable, that steadily pursues this conduct.

Colbert, the famous minister of Lewis the fourteenth, had the vanity to think himself capable, by arbitrary laws and regulations, to make France a great manufacturing and commercial country. He endeavoured to direct the industry and commerce of a great kingdom, upon the same plan as the departments of his public office, in the duties of which he was remarkably acute and regular; and, instead of allowing every man to pursue his own interest his own way, upon the liberal plan of equality and justice, he bestowed on certain branches of industry extraordinary privileges, while he laid agriculture under oppressive restraints; so that, by his visionary projects, he ruined agriculture, and afflicted the nation with universal distress.

The blind, infatuated policy of Great Britain has been for years pursuing the same measures, until hundreds of her valuable subjects, engaged in agriculture, have emigrated to other countries, and her manufacturing population have been reduced to poverty and wretchedness.

To prevent similar calamities from overwhelming our beloved country, I know of no greater service your valuable society can render it, than that of animating our fellow-citizens, engaged in rural affairs, to establish societies in every district of Pennsylvania, for the purpose of promoting agriculture and domestic manufactures. Each society should be in possession of a well-selected library of books, on agriculture, chymistry, ethics, natural history, natural and political law, government, &c. Such institutions promote reading and reflection; and, as knowledge grows on the mind, the thirst for further knowledge augments. However necessary it is that the minds of the yeomanry of Pennsylvania should be cultivated by science and literature, to fill the different offices of the commonwealth with reputation to themselves, and advantage to their country, I am sensible that knowledge and literary accomplishments alone, however extensive, will not insure a faithful discharge of private and public duties. The understanding may be improved, whilst the heart remains barren; and that unless religion is awak-

ened into activity, the acquisition of learning may only add strength to guilt, and malignity to crime. Something more is wanting than the mere wisdom of the world, to give usefulness or honour to the character of man; and that something is, that individuals, as well as the rulers of nations, should study with deep attention, and recognize the laws which God has so manifestly engraven on the organization of man, when he endued him with existence.

The Duke of Sully, prime minister of Henry the fourth, relates, in his most valuable memoirs, a case in point. About to embark for England, as ambassador from the court of France, having in his retinue upwards of two hundred gentlemen, he observes, "Just before my departure, old Servin came and presented his son to me, and begged I would use my endeavours to make him a man of some worth and honesty; but he confessed it was what he dared not hope, not through any want of understanding or capacity in the young man, but from his natural inclination to all kinds of vice. The old man was in the right: what he told me having excited my curiosity to gain a thorough knowledge of young Servin, I found him to be at once both a wonder and a monster; for I can give no other idea of that assemblage of the most excellent and most pernicious qualities. Let the reader represent to himself, a man of a genius so lively, and an understanding so extensive, as rendered him scarce ignorant of any thing that could be known; of so vast and ready a comprehension, that he immediately made himself master of what he attempted; and so prodigious a memory, that he never forgot what he had once learned: he possessed all parts of philosophy and the mathematics, particularly fortification and drawing; even in theology, he was so well skilled, that he was an excellent preacher, whenever he had a mind to exert that talent, and an able disputant for or against the reformed religion indifferently: he not only understood Greek, Hebrew, and all the languages which we call learned, but all the different jargons or modern dialects; he accented and pronounced so naturally, and so perfectly imitated the gestures and manners both of the several nations of Europe, and the particular provinces of France, that he might have been taken for a native of all or any of these countries; and this quality he applied to counterfeit all sorts

of persons, wherein he succeeded wonderfully : he was moreover, the best comedian and greatest droll that perhaps ever appeared ; he had a genius for poetry, and had made many verses ; he played upon almost all instruments, was a perfect master of music, and sung most agreeably and justly : he likewise could say mass ; for he was of a disposition to do as well as to know all things : his body was perfectly well suited to his mind ; he was light, nimble, dextrous, and fit for all exercises ; he could ride well ; and in dancing, wrestling and leaping he was admired ; there are not any recreative games that he did not know ; and he was skilled in almost all mechanic arts.

“ But now for the reverse of the medal : here it appears he was treacherous, cruel, cowardly, deceitful, a liar, a cheat, a drunkard and glutton, a sharper in play, immersed in every species of vice, a blasphemer, an Atheist ; in a word, in him might be found all the vices contrary to nature, honour, religion, and society ; the truth of which he himself evinced with his last breath ; for he died in the flower of his age, in a common brothel, perfectly corrupted by his debaucheries, and expired with a glass in his hand, cursing and denying God.”

There is another instance, if particular ones were necessary to corroborate a truth of which every person's recollection could furnish examples. The great lord chancellor Bacon, whose genius towered above the age in which he lived, and by its intuitive glance anticipated the discoveries of future ages ; who, favoured equally by fortune, and covered by honours, yet so far neglected the dictates of that divine monitor in his own breast, as to degrade his high character, and suffer himself to be corrupted by bribes.

The catholic charitable disposition which at present prevails amongst the various sects of Christians, affords an opportunity for the ministers of the Gospel, of every denomination, in their intercourse with each other, and in their several congregations, to aim rather to secure the essentials of Christianity—mildness, gentleness, forbearance, and universal love towards all men—rather than to be solicitous of accomplishing what is impossible—a perfect agreement in all points of inferior consideration. And this duty of the clergy should not only extend to individual citizens, but to the

rulers of our country ; seeing that the high republican form of the government of the United States, and its extent of territory, will owe its future happiness and prosperity to a moral, rather than to a physical power ; and therefore the necessity of impressing on the minds of its citizens a proper sense of their religious duties.

The Moravian settlement at Bethlehem affords, to the most superficial observer, a proof of the advantages which religious instruction is calculated to produce on the manners and practices of society. Their love of order and regularity ; their mild and conciliating demeanour ; harmony, neatness, and comfort reigning in their dwellings ; their farms well cultivated ; their wives and daughters employed in those domestic manufactures, which are a real advantage to the country.

These blessed effects of religion not only exist among the Moravians ; but are observable in the private families of Friends, and other denominations of Christians, seated on their farms, in various parts of our happy country. It is true, on account of their dispersed situation, they have not an opportunity of daily meeting together, as at Bethlehem, and receiving instruction and advice from the lips of a minister of the Gospel : yet God has not left them without a monitor in their own breasts, to direct them in their best and only true interests. He who is accustomed to commune with his own heart in private, will sometimes hear truths which even a minister of the Gospel will not tell him ; a more sound instructor will awaken in him those latent suggestions, which an intercourse with the world had suppressed. Solitude is the hallowed ground which religion has chosen for her own. The virtuous and the pious have ever been addicted to serious retirement.

In a national point of view, it is all-important that those citizens, entrusted with the dignified and influential stations of legislators, should be convinced, in their own minds, that the universal laws of God are founded on the eternal, immutable principles of justice ; and that they on no occasion can violate them with impunity, by ephemeral laws, sacrificing the rights and happiness of the husbandman to national ambition or individual cupidity : yet such has been too generally the fate of agriculture in all countries. These

evils increase with the corruptions of governments, until agriculture is destroyed; and the nation, for want of its support, becomes extinct.

To prevent this calamity from overwhelming our country, it becomes the paramount duty of agricultural societies, composed of patriotic citizens, as well as of every virtuous individual, to enlighten the public mind to a sense of perfect justice: for, although agriculture flies from the grasp of the tyrant and the slave, it smiles on the exertions of a virtuous people. The great empire of China, founded on the broad basis of agriculture, has existed in prosperity, time out of record; whilst the European nations, infatuated with the glare of commerce, manufactures, and war, have flitted away like the shadow of a transient cloud, leaving themselves the victims of their own ambition, cupidity, and folly.

If then the citizens of the United States desire permanence to their infant republic, let them sedulously avoid war; and with earnestness promote agriculture, connected with domestic industry and virtue, as the only solid basis to the prosperity and happiness of their country.

THE END.

